



REGINALD MARSH'S
NEW YORK

June 29–August 24, 1983
Whitney Museum of American Art
at Philip Morris

The New York Reginald Marsh painted in the 1930s was changing. It was a city being transformed by the new communications industries: movies, radio, advertising. And Marsh used all the imagery of that world—its news headlines, movie titles, popular songs, and signs—in his art. These documentary details give Marsh's art the look and feel of contemporary reality just as the subjects themselves, taxi-dance halls, burlesque shows, Coney Island, and the Bowery, speak for the character of the era.

Reginald Marsh was born in 1898 into an upper middle-class family. The son of artists, he drew from an early age, illustrating his diaries and school yearbooks. After graduating from Yale in 1920, he came to New York, where he sold illustrations to publications as diverse as *Vanity Fair* and *The New Masses*. In 1922, as a staff artist for the *New York Daily News*, he produced a daily cartoon review of vaudeville shows; three years later, he became one of the original cartoonists for *The New Yorker*. In his spare time, he began to study painting at the Art Students League of New York.

Marsh loved New York. He walked the streets, sketching endlessly; at his death in 1954, over two hundred sketchbooks were found in his studio. These sketches, along with his cartoons, illustrations, and the documentary photographs he took, became the stuff of his paintings. But Marsh's art is not simply a literal recording of contemporary reality. He was part of a group of painters who lived and worked on Fourteenth Street, painters such as Isabel Bishop and Kenneth Hayes Miller, his teacher and colleague, who were devoted to studying the Old Masters. Marsh even borrowed his painting medium, egg tempera, from the masters. Increasingly, elements of the art-historical past intruded on his contemporary world—a classical Venus is on stage at Minsky's New Gotham burlesque theater, deposed Christs collapse on the Bowery, the city crowds teem like masses at a Last Judgment.

Moreover, despite the diversity of the city, Marsh returned to the same places and subjects

time and again. He was attracted to a particular part of New York—its exhibitionist side—the beach, the Bowery, burlesque. Burlesque queens, Bowery bums, musclemen at Coney Island, these are the constant performers in his New York scenes. Their repetition suggests that they had a special fascination for the artist; they were public figures inhabiting a private world.

Reginald Marsh's New York is an evocative combination of past and present. It is personal, yet timeless. Marsh focuses on the public spectacles, the street life, the noisy exhibitions of New York in the thirties, but expresses the restless energies of human life.

After its presentation at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, the exhibition will travel to the Terra Museum of American Art, Evanston, Illinois; the San Jose Museum of Art, California; and the Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, Athens.

Funding for the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris is provided by Philip Morris Incorporated.

© 1983 Whitney Museum of American Art

CHECKLIST

Dimensions are in inches, height preceding width, and refer to sheet size for drawings and plate size for prints. An asterisk indicates that a work will be shown only at the Whitney Museum of American Art at Philip Morris, two asterisks that a work will appear only in the traveling exhibition.

PAINTINGS

People Seated and Standing on Subway, c. 1928

Oil on canvas, 36 × 48

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh 80.31.8

Why Not Use the "L"?, 1930

Tempera on panel, 36 × 48

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Purchase 31.293

Chatham Square, 1931

Tempera on panel, 47½ × 35¼

Archer M. Huntington Art Gallery, University of
Texas, Austin; The James and Mari Michener
Collection

Holy Name Mission, 1931

Tempera on panel, 35½ × 47½

Collection of International Business Machines
Corporation, Armonk, New York

Pip & Flip, 1932

Tempera on canvas mounted on panel, 48¼ × 48¼

Daniel J. Terra Collection, Terra Museum of
American Art, Evanston, Illinois

Lifeguards, 1933

Tempera on panel, 35½ × 23⅝

Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia,
Athens; Purchased from the United States
Department of State, War Assets Administration

Star Burlesk, 1933

Tempera on panel, 48 × 36

The Regis Collection, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ten Cents a Dance, 1933

Tempera on panel, 36 × 48

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh 80.31.10

Coney Island Beach, 1934

Tempera on panel, 36 × 40

Yale University Art Gallery, New Haven,
Connecticut; Gift of Felicia Meyer Marsh

Negroes on Rockaway Beach, 1934

Tempera on panel, 30 × 40

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert Hackett 61.2

- ** *Paramount Pictures*, 1934
 Tempera on panel, 36 × 30
 Collection of Marjorie and Charles Benton
- Minsky's Chorus*, 1935
 Tempera on panel, 30 × 36
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Promised and partial gift of Mr. and Mrs. Albert
 Hackett in honor of Edith and Lloyd Goodrich
- A Morning in May*, 1936
 Tempera on panel, 24 × 30
 Private collection
- * *Twenty Cent Movie*, 1936
 Tempera on panel, 30 × 40
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Purchase 37.43
- ** *Coney Island Beach*, 1939
 Tempera on panel, 29½ × 49½
 Collection of Marjorie and Charles Benton

DRAWINGS

- Olympic Theatre, 14th Street*, c. 1923
 Ink on paper, 22 × 6½
 Collection of Marjorie and Charles Benton
- ** *A Model for 10¢*, c. 1927–30
 Ink on paper, 9 × 11½
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh 80.31.102
- Sketch after Rubens' *Diana Surprised by Satyrs*,
 c. 1928
 Chinese ink and pencil on paper, 11 × 8½
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh 80.31.111
- ** *Burlesque audience*, c. 1929 (from sketchbook
 no. 132)
 Ink on paper, 6⅞ × 4¾
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh
- ** *Burlesque theater*, c. 1929 (from sketchbook no. 132)
 Ink on paper, 6⅞ × 4¾
 The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh
- ** *People on a subway*, c. 1930
 Charcoal pencil on paper, 4½ × 7⅙
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh T78.1.753
- ** *I.R.T.*, 1932
 Charcoal pencil on paper, 10 × 8
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh T78.1.1021
- ** *Sketch for Bread Line—No One Has Starved*, 1932
 Pencil on paper, 8½ × 14
 Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
 Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh 80.31.29

Study for *Pip & Flip*, 1932

Pencil on paper, $14\frac{7}{8} \times 9\frac{1}{2}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh

Studies for *Lifeguards*, 1933

Pencil on paper, $15 \times 10\frac{1}{2}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh T78.1.1103

**Study for *Coney Island Beach*, 1934

Ink on tracing paper, $10\frac{5}{8} \times 10$

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

*Four sketches for *Twenty Cent Movie*, 1936 (from
sketchbook no. 169)

Ink on paper, $4\frac{1}{2} \times 6$ each

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;
Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh

*Study for *Twenty Cent Movie*, 1936

Ink and pencil on paper, $9\frac{1}{2} \times 12\frac{3}{8}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Gift of Edith and Lloyd Goodrich 73.1

PRINTS

Audience Burlesk, 1929

Etching, 6×8

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

Gaiety Burlesque, 1930

Etching, $11\frac{13}{16} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Purchase 31.777

Bread Line—No One Has Starved, 1932

Etching and engraving, $6\frac{3}{8} \times 11\frac{7}{8}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Katherine Schmidt Shubert Bequest 82.43.1

Tattoo—Shave—Haircut, 1932

Etching, 10×10

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

Coney Island Beach, 1934

Etching, $9\frac{3}{4} \times 9\frac{3}{4}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;
Katherine Schmidt Shubert Bequest T80.2.22

Smokehounds, 1934

Etching, 12×9

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

Striptease at New Gotham, 1935

Etching, 12×9

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

**** *Coney Island Beach No. 1*, 1939 (restruck 1969)**

Etching, $9\frac{5}{8} \times 11\frac{5}{8}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;

Original plate donated by William Benton 69.97y

Diana Dancing Academy, 1939

Engraving, 8×10

The William Benton Museum of Art, University of
Connecticut, Storrs

Pickaback, 1939 (restruck 1969)

Engraving, $9\frac{7}{8} \times 4\frac{7}{8}$

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;

Original plate donated by William Benton 69.97v

SKETCHBOOKS

Sketchbook (no. 126), c. 1924–35

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York;

Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh T78.1.858

Sketchbooks (nos. 47, 59, 61, 83, 102, 103, 109, 130,
160, 179), 1930–38

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York;

Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh

PHOTOGRAPHS

A representative selection of photographs (c. 1938–40) of the Bowery, Coney Island, theaters, and the subway, and four snapshots (c. 1933) of beaches, from the Print Archives, Museum of the City of New York; Bequest of Felicia Meyer Marsh. The copy prints in the exhibition approximate the sizes of Marsh's original prints (photographs 5×7 inches, snapshots $3\frac{1}{2} \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ inches); however, Marsh did not intend his photographs to be works of art and his own developing and printing were not carefully done.

Photograph of Marsh sketching at Coney Island, c. 1950. Collection of Mr. and Mrs. Joel W. Harnett.

DOCUMENTS

A representative selection of materials from the Reginald Marsh Papers, Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., including notebooks, scrapbooks, calendars, diaries, and letters.

The music in the background—original period recordings—has been provided by Mr. Bernard Strassberg, a New York City resident, who has an extensive collection of popular and jazz recordings from the 1930s.

Whitney Museum of American Art
at Philip Morris
120 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10017

Gallery Hours

Monday–Saturday 11:00–6:00
Thursday evening until 7:30
Free Admission

Gallery Talks

Monday, Wednesday, Friday at 12:30
Tours by appointment
For information call (212) 878-2550

Publications

Reginald Marsh's New York by Marilyn Cohen. Published by the Whitney Museum of American Art in association with Dover Publications, Inc., New York; 128 pages, 154 illustrations, 4 in full color, \$8.95.

Poster, *Twenty Cent Movie*, 25 × 27 inches, \$3.00.

Cover: Reginald Marsh. *Pickaback*, 1939 (restruck 1969). Engraving, 9⁷/₈ × 4⁷/₈ inches. Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Original plate donated by William Benton, 69.97v. Photograph by Geoffrey Clements.